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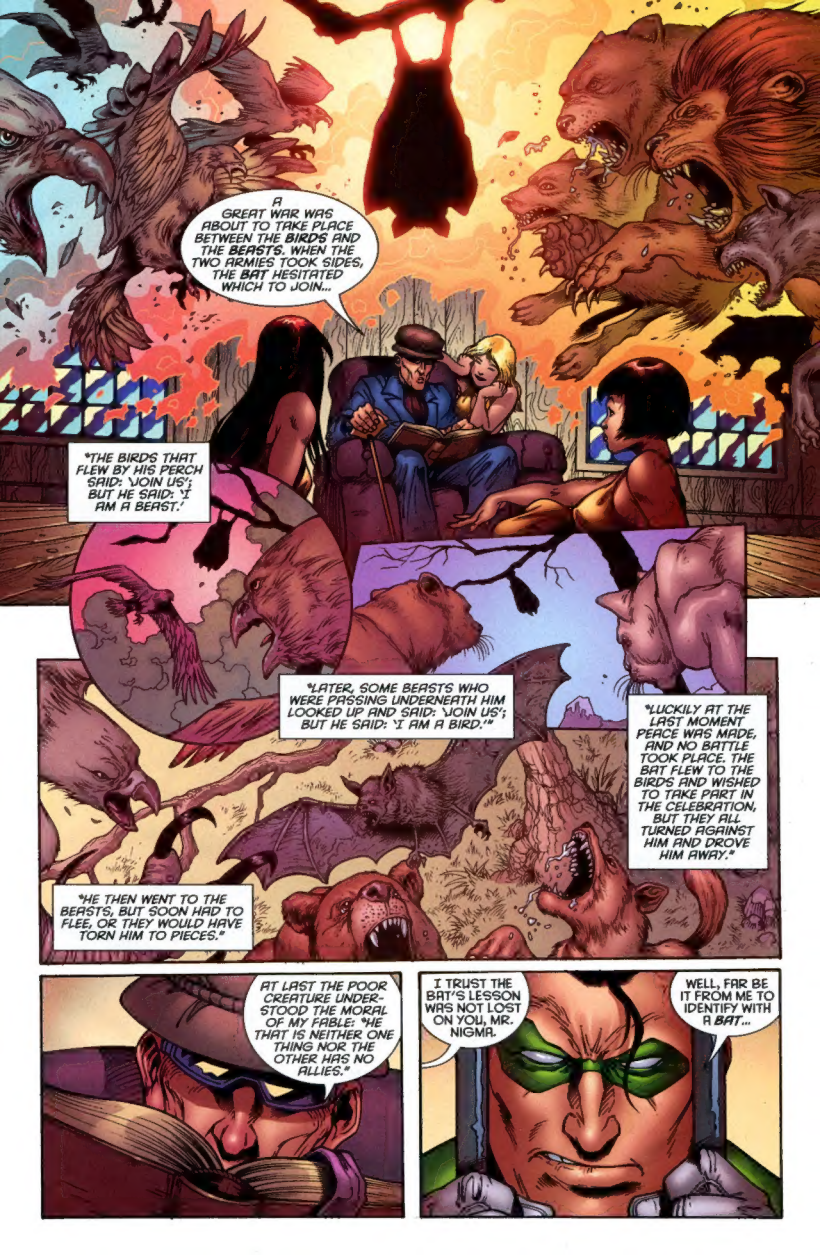

A GREAT WAR WAS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE BIRDS AND THE BEASTS. WHEN THE TWO ARMIES TOOK SIDES, THE BAT HESITATED WHICH TO JOIN...
"THE BIRDS THAT FLEW BY HIS PERCH SAID: 'JOIN US'; BUT HE SAID: 'I AM A BEAST.'
"LATER, SOME BEASTS WHO WERE PASSING UNDERNEATH HIM LOOKED UP AND SAID: 'JOIN US'; BUT HE SAID: 'I AM A BIRD.'"
"LUCKILY AT THE LAST MOMENT PEACE WAS MADE, AND NO BATTLE TOOK PLACE. THE BAT FLEW TO THE BIRDS AND WISHED TO TAKE PART IN THE CELEBRATION, BUT THEY ALL TURNED AGAINST HIM AND DROVE HIM AWAY."
"HE THEN WENT TO THE BEASTS, BUT SOON HAD TO FLEE, OR THEY WOULD HAVE TORN HIM TO PIECES."
AT LAST THE POOR CREATURE UNDERSTOOD THE MORAL OF MY FABLE: "HE THAT IS NEITHER ONE THING NOR THE OTHER HAS NO ALLIES."
I TRUST THE BAT'S LESSON WAS NOT LOST ON YOU, MR. NIGMA.
WELL, FAR BE IT FROM ME TO IDENTIFY WITH A BAT...

GOTHAM CITY
SIRENS
in
TAKING SIDES
brought to you by
PAUL DINI writer
ANDRES GUINALDO guest penciller
RAUL FERNANDEZ guest inker
IAN HANNIN colors
SAL CIPRIANO letters
JANELLE SIEGEL assistant editor
MIKE MARTS editor
cover by GUILLEM MARCH
...BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO TO THESE EXTREMES TO MAKE YOUR POINT.

WHEN I FIND A MAN BREAKING INTO MY NEW HIDEOUT, I HAVE TO BE SURE WHERE HIS LOYALTIES LIE.

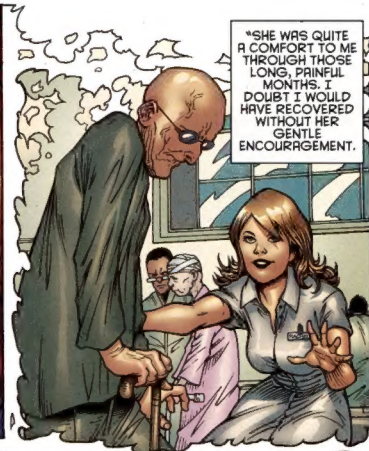
SOME SAY YOU'VE GIVEN UP YOUR VILLAINOUS WAYS AND HAVE JOINED THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS.
THAT MAKES YOU AN *ENEMY*.

OTHERS CLAIM YOU'RE PULLING AN ELABORATE SHAM AND ARE AS TWISTED AS ALWAYS. I FIND THAT MORE TO MY LIKING...

...THOUGH YOU'RE NOT KNOWN FOR BEING AN ENTIRELY *TRUSTWORTHY* ALLY.

IN THIS GAME, DOC, THE ONLY PERSON I TRUST IS *MYSELF.*
TRUST IS A RARE COMMODITY IN GOTHAM THESE DAYS.
I TRUSTED THE *BROKER* LAST YEAR WHEN I WAS NEGOTIATING WITH HIM TO BUY THIS SHELTER.
THE LOWER LEVEL'S ANIMAL RUNS, HOLDING SPACES AND AUTOMATED *CAGES* SEEMED TAILOR-MADE FOR MY MENAGERIE. ALL I NEEDED TO DO WAS MEET BROKER'S OUTRAGEOUS PRICE AND THE SHELTER WAS *MINE.*
"UNFORTUNATELY A SERIES OF LUCRATIVE ROBBERIES I HAD PLANNED WAS RUINED BY A WITNESS UNDERLING NAMED *LEFTY KNOX.*
"ADDING TO MY MISERY, I FOUND MYSELF THE LOSER IN A BATTLE BETWEEN *BATMAN, CATWOMAN* AND THE MANIAC *HUSH.*
"I WAS TAKEN AWAY MORE *DEAD* THAN ALIVE. MY MONTHS OF RECOVERY IN BLACKGATE HOSPITAL WERE NOT CHEERED WHEN I LEARNED THE BROKER EVENTUALLY SOLD THE SHELTER TO *CATWOMAN.*"

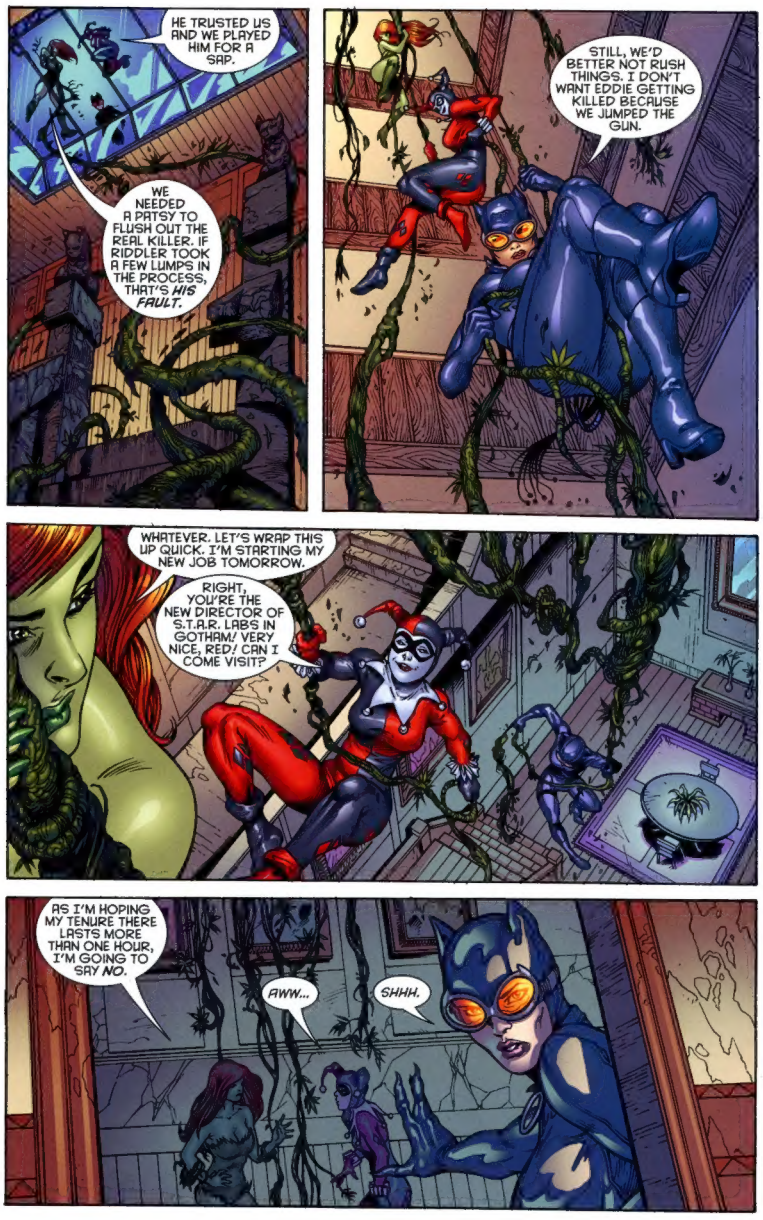
AND NOW THE PIECES START TO FALL INTO PLACE. I FIGURED THE VICTIM WAS A NURSE. PROBABLY THE SAME ONE WHO HELPED YOU THROUGH YOUR REHABILITATION.
AH, YES...DEAR RACHEL.

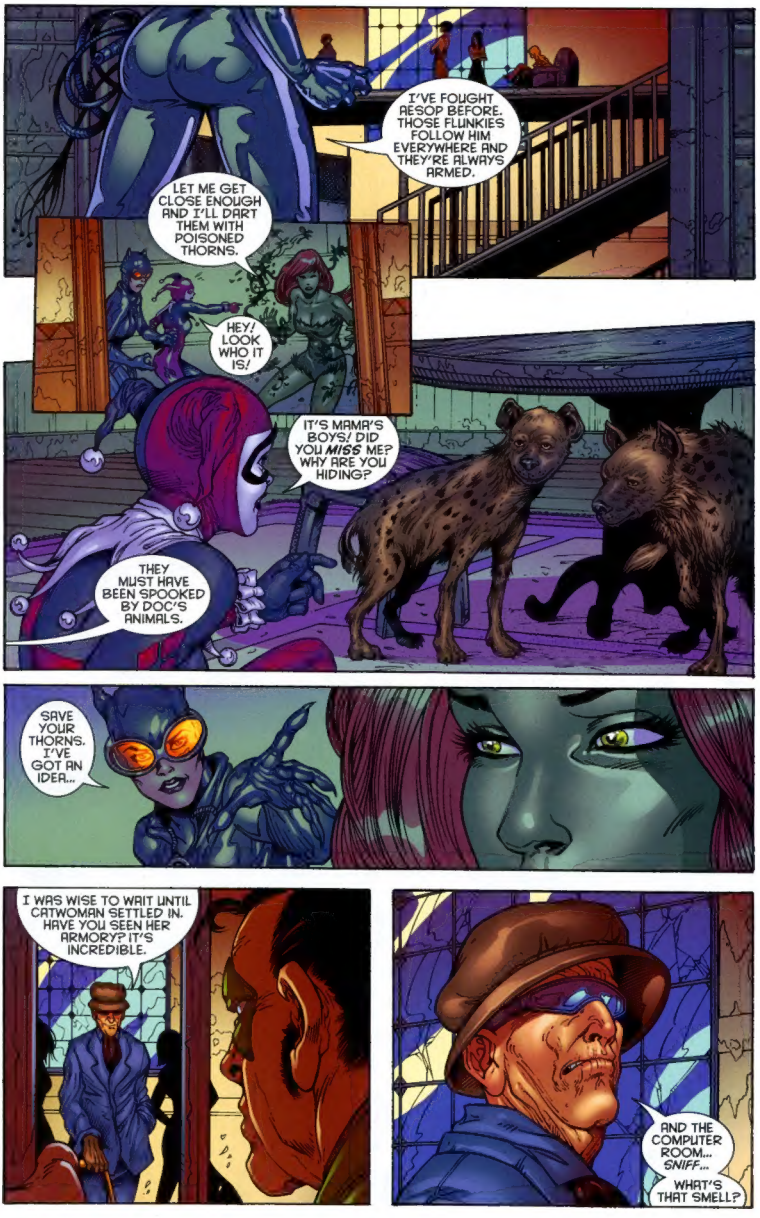

"SHE WAS QUITE A COMFORT TO ME THROUGH THOSE LONG, PAINFUL MONTHS. I DOUBT I WOULD HAVE RECOVERED WITHOUT HER GENTLE ENCOURAGEMENT.

"IT GRIEVED ME TO MAKE HER THE VICTIM IN THIS AFFAIR, BUT AS THE POISONED FARMER BEMOANED OF THE SNAKE HE HAD SAVED--"

"THE GREATEST KINDNESS WILL NOT BIND THE UNGRATEFUL." I KNOW, I'VE READ YOUR LITTLE KIDS' BOOK.

SO YOUR MUSES WORKED OVER NURSIE, THEN YOU HAD YOUR EAGLES DROP HER THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT.
THE THREAT OF BEING BUSTED AGAIN SCARED OUT THE GIRLS, ALLOWING YOU TO WALTZ IN AND TAKE THEIR HIDEOUT FOR YOUR OWN.
THAT WAS THE GIST OF IT, YES.
WELL. THAT'S ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.
YEAH. BUT I FEEL KINDA BAD FOR EDDIE.

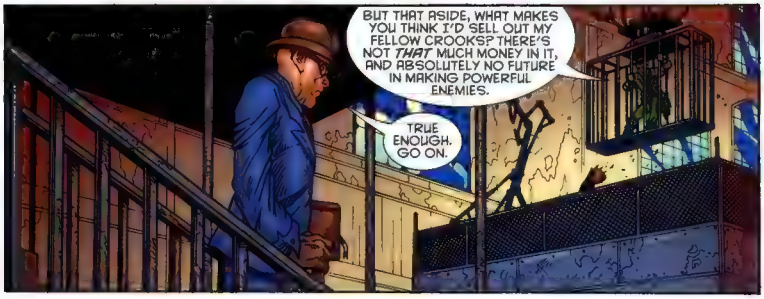

HE TRUSTED US AND WE PLAYED HIM FOR A SAP.
WE NEEDED A PATSY TO FLUSH OUT THE REAL KILLER. IF RIDDLER TOOK A FEW LUMPS IN THE PROCESS, THAT'S HIS FAULT.
STILL, WE'D BETTER NOT RUSH THINGS. I DON'T WANT EDDIE GETTING KILLED BECAUSE WE JUMPED THE GUN.
WHATEVER. LET'S WRAP THIS UP QUICK. I'M STARTING MY NEW JOB TOMORROW.
RIGHT, YOU'RE THE NEW DIRECTOR OF S.T.A.R. LABS IN GOTHAM/ VERY NICE, RED/ CAN I COME VISIT?
AS I'M HOPING MY TENURE THERE LASTS MORE THAN ONE HOUR, I'M GOING TO SAY NO.
AWW...
SHHH.


I'VE FOUGHT AESOP BEFORE. THOSE FLUNKIES FOLLOW HIM EVERYWHERE AND THEY'RE ALWAYS ARMED.
LET ME GET CLOSE ENOUGH AND I'LL DART THEM WITH POISONED THORNS.
HEY! LOOK WHO IT IS!
IT'S MAMA'S BOYS! DID YOU MISS ME? WHY ARE YOU HIDING?
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN SPOOKED BY DOC'S ANIMALS.
SAVE YOUR THORNS. I'VE GOT AN IDEA...
I WAS WISE TO WAIT UNTIL CATWOMAN SETTLED IN. HAVE YOU SEEN HER ARMORY? IT'S INCREDIBLE.
AND THE COMPUTER ROOM... SNIFF...
WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

AGHH! WRETCHED BEAST!
HEEEE...
HUNT DOWN THOSE FOUL CREATURES AND SHOOT THEM!
IMMEDIATELY, DOCTOR!
I'M SURPRISED, DOC. NO LOVE FOR THE LOWLY HYENA?
BAH! THEY LACK THE FOXES' CUNNING, THE LIONS' COURAGE AND THE WOLVES' TENACITY. AT BEST THEY'LL BE FOOD FOR MY OTHER PETS.
THEY WENT IN HERE.

AND NOW THE QUESTION REMAINS... WHAT TO DO WITH THIS OTHER SCAVENGER?
I RESENT THAT.

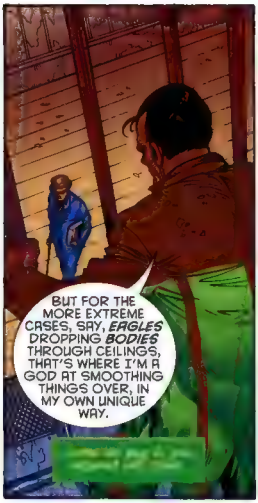
AND WHAT ELSE WOULD I CALL ONE WHO SELLS HIS FORMER BROTHERS IN CRIME TO THE POLICE?
FORGIVE ME, "BRO." I DON'T RECALL THE TWO OF US EVER SPENDING ANY QUALITY TIME IN THE ARKHAM REC ROOM.


BUT THAT ASIDE, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D SELL OUT MY FELLOW CROOKS? THERE'S NOT *THAT* MUCH MONEY IN IT, AND ABSOLUTELY NO FUTURE IN MAKING POWERFUL ENEMIES.
TRUE ENOUGH. GO ON.

SEE, RATTING OUT EVERY-DAY BLACKMAILERS AND CHEATING HUBBIES IS ONE THING. IT BRINGS IN FAT PAYCHECKS AND MAKES FOR NICE HEADLINES.

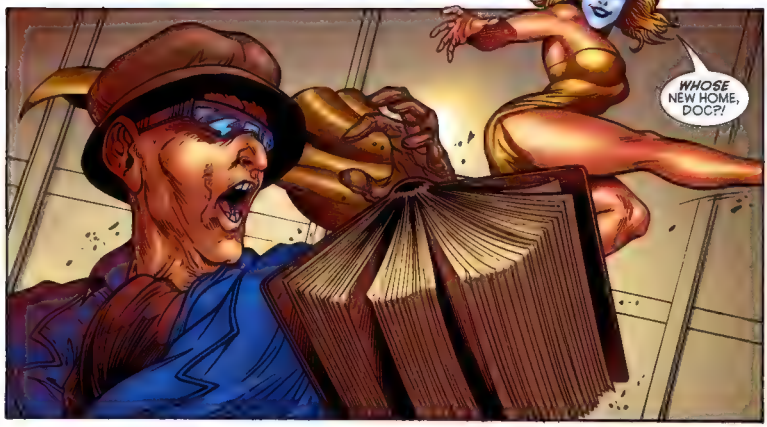
IT ALSO ESTABLISHES A MODICUM OF CREDIBILITY WITH THE COPS.
THEY'RE MORE INCLINED TO LOOK ELSEWHERE IF I SUGGEST CLUES THAT POINT TOWARD OTHER SUSPECTS.
CERTAINLY THEY HAVE THEIR OWN DETECTIVES. WHY WOULD THEY NEED YOU?

AGAIN, FOR THE SMALL STUFF THEY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR.


BUT FOR THE MORE EXTREME CASES, SAY, *EAGLES* DROPPING *BODIES* THROUGH CEILINGS, THAT'S WHERE I'M A GOD AT SMOOTHING THINGS OVER, IN MY OWN UNIQUE WAY.

I SEE SOME VALUE IN THAT.

CALLIOPE, CLIO, ERATO. MAKE OUR ALLY WELCOME IN MY NEW HOME.


WHOSE NEW HOME, DOC?!

TRAITOR!
I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT, HONEST.

HE'S RIGHT. WE LET OURSELVES IN.
OH, SO YOU SNUCK ALONG WAITING FOR ME TO TAKE THE FALL.

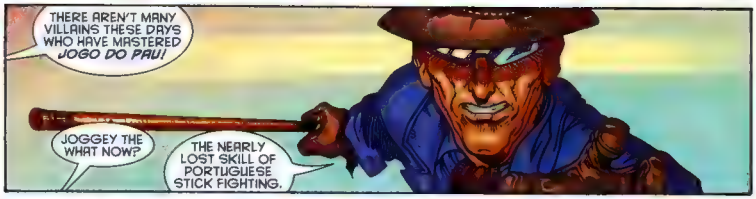
NOW WHO'S THE TRAITOR?
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...

I KNEW WE SHOULD HAVE LET AESOP KILL HIM FIRST.
I DO YOU A SOLID AND THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME?!
DON'T ACT SO INNOCENT. WE HEARD YOU SUCKING UP TO THE OLD FOSSIL.
UM, CAN WE FIGHT LATER? DOC'S GETTING AWAY.

YOU MIGHT HAVE TAKEN ME HAD YOU STAYED UNITED...

...BUT DIVIDED, YOU SHALL CERTAINLY FALL!

UH, SELINA? YOU SPEAK LION, RIGHT?
CALM DOWN, EDDIE.
EASY, BIG GUY. NO REASON FOR YOU AND ME TO FIGHT.
SHE TURNED MY LIONS AGAINST ME ONCE. NEVER AGAIN!
KRAK
AHH!



WHOA!

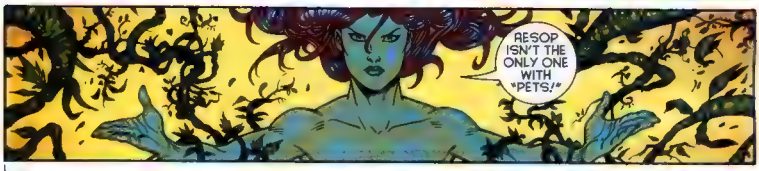
WHEN I LEARNED I WAS TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE WITH A CANE, I WAS DETERMINED TO TURN IT TO MY ADVANTAGE.

YOU'RE HANDY WITH THAT SHILLELAGH, DOC!

LET ME SHOW YOU A NEW PLACE TO STICK IT!

UNGH!

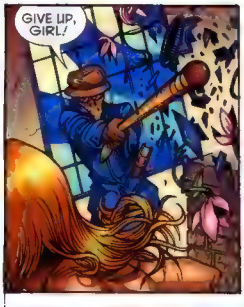
IRONIC, ISN'T IT, PAM? WE'RE GOING OUT TOGETHER.
HARDLY.


AESOP ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WITH *PETS!*

AND MINE ARE JUST AS DEVOTED TO PROTECTING ME.

THAT SHOULD KEEP THE BEASTS AT BAY.

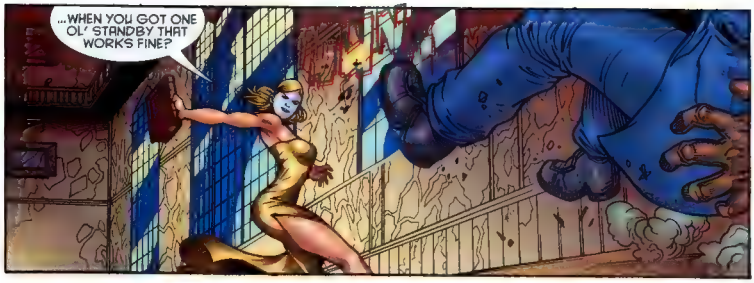
ROARR
ON SECOND THOUGHT, EDDIE, LET'S BRING SELINA AROUND... FAST!

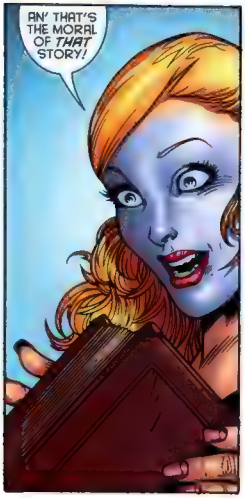

GIVE UP, GIRL!

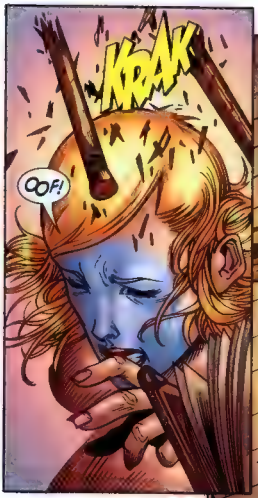
I HAVE A HUNDRED WAYS OF CRIPPLING A MAN!
POOR ME...

...I ONLY HAVE THIS ONE!

SEE, DOC? JUST LIKE THE STORY ABOUT THE FOX AND THE CAT! WHY FUTZ AROUND WITH A BAG OF FANCY TRICKS...


...WHEN YOU GOT ONE OL' STANDBY THAT WORK'S FINE?


AN' THAT'S THE MORAL OF *THAT* STORY!


KRAK
OOF!

A VERY FITTING MORAL FOR YOU, FOOL. *HE LAUGHS BEST WHO LAUGHS LAST!*

HAFFFFFFF
AHH!
CALL THEM OFF!

JOKE'S ON YOU, DOC. NO ONE LAUGHS BETTER THAN MY BABIES!
YOU'LL REGRET THIS--ALL OF YOU!

Once again Catwoman has cost me dearly.
IT'S OKAY, BIG GUY. NO ONE'S GOING TO HURT YOU...
LUCKY FOR US, MY FAVORITE FABLE IS "ANDROCLES AND THE LION."

The next time we meet, the outcome of her tale will be a tragic one.
Though I fear I may be a while in writing it.
POLICE
SWAT

"There's no honor among thieves." I don't think that's an actual moral, but the old saying proved itself true when all three of Aesop's "muses" sang to the police.

They said they were all innocent in the death of the slain nurse, and that they had no real knowledge of how twisted the old man's scheme had become.
Well, that's for the courts to decide, not me.

I had enough trouble convincing Gordon of the girls' innocence. I laid out each bit of evidence and walked him through it as slowly and methodically as I felt the oaf could process it.
Still, all those years he watched Batman haul my sorry ass into Arkham may have put doubts in his mind regarding my deductive skills.

In the end the good Commissioner's own forensics team began to confirm what I had already said.
Gordon let the girls go because it would have been an unholy battle to bring them in.
Also, now that he knew where they were living, he could find them again easily enough.

As for me, I walked away with a grateful kiss from Harley, a generous check from Selina and a nod of complete indifference from Pam.
The nod I'm used to, the check I plan to destroy, and the kiss I shrugged off. I could see the hurt in Harley's eyes, though I doubt she looked that hard to see it in mine.
They used me, plain and simple. Yes, that comes with the territory in my line of work, and I'll take it from strangers, but never friends.
Friends. Now tell me honestly, Eddie, when have you ever had friends?
EDDIE?
Maybe that explosion in my face opened my eyes to the artifice of this "clean" life I've been living.
How long will it be until I rip away the facade of respectability completely and embrace whatever lies rolling beneath?
Well.
That's the riddle, isn't it?
The End?

TO SAY IT'S A BIG WEEK FOR THE DCU WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT.

Blackest Night #8 has just hit the stands, and I'm willing to bet that the incredible ending to **Geoff Johns**' magnum opus has blown you away. I know you have many questions about the future of the DCU, and all I can really say is that you'd better be prepared for a lot of surprises. The best place to follow all the upcoming action is in these Brightest Day titles, conveniently presented for you here in checklist form. Be sure to look back here and on The Source (DCUBLOG.COM) for frequent updates, and enjoy the start of a new era for DC Comics in Brightest Day!

- **Ian Sattler**, Senior Story Editor DCU

APRIL
Brightest Day #0
Green Lantern #53
Green Lantern Corps #47
The Flash #1
Justice League of America #44

MAY
Brightest Day #1
Brightest Day #2
Justice League: Generation Lost #1
Justice League: Generation Lost #2
Green Lantern #54
Green Lantern Corps #48
The Flash #2
Justice League of America #45
Titans: Villains for Hire Special #1
Birds of Prey #1

JUNE
Brightest Day #3
Brightest Day #4
Justice League: Generation Lost #3
Justice League: Generation Lost #4
Green Lantern #55
Green Lantern Corps #49
The Flash #3
Justice League of America #46
Titans #24
Birds of Prey #2
Green Arrow #1

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